Students obtain degrees like a python eats an elephant…one bite at a time. The program management team has worked from this perspective over the last 9 months to try to impact students at the most essential level of their experience, that is the individual courses they are engaged in completing. Students successfully completing courses leads to students staying on track for graduation progress, which in turn leads to retention, satisfaction, and ultimately graduation.

This focus was why we launched a major initiative with the assessment team to improve student pass rates and completion rates in individual courses. It has also been at the root of our increased collaboration with other departments. In the last year we have worked more closely with admissions to make sure we set appropriate expectations for incoming students in each program, held focus groups with students and mentors with student services to get feedback on various initiatives, and worked with graduation and SAP specialists to encourage students near graduation to complete their programs.

This is only the beginning. There are a number of projects underway to further improve the student experience, through better Learning Resources, more focused Courses of Study, and improved quality assurance through data analysis in product management.

The purpose of this newsletter is to give you a general overview of some of the work that Program Management has been engaged in, overall results, and what we see as some upcoming opportunities to further improve the WGU experience. The Senior Managers in each of these areas are more than willing to go into greater detail about our efforts or answer any questions you might have about the information you see here.

We look forward to working more closely with all of you to make WGU an even greater place for both students and employees.

Greg Fowler
Associate Provost, Program Management

How Passed/Completion Rates Work

Pass rates are the number of actual passes (not students) for an assessment divided by the total number of attempts for the assessment. For example if 1 student took the assessment a total of 3 times before passing the pass rate is 33%. If 5 students each passed the assessment on the first attempt at it, the pass rate is 100%. What this tells us is the level of difficulty students are having in passing an assessment, which may be due to misalignment of resources or students not engaging the resources prior to taking the assessment. Generally a pass rate of 80-85% is considered appropriate.

Completion raters are the number of students that successfully complete an assessment divided by the number of students enrolled in an assessment. If only 10 students out of 20 enrolled in an assessment complete it, the pass rate is 50%. If 15 of the 20 students enrolled complete it, the pass rate is 75%. Since all students need to pass all assessments, the ideal would be to have a 100% completion rate.

College of Education (Sr. Product Manager: Conrad Lotze)

New Development/Redevelopment: WGU launched its MS in Curriculum and Instruction degree in March 2011. The Granddaddy of all projects began in earnest in September, 2010, with the current redevelopment of the Professional Studies Domains, which include: Foundations of Teaching, Effective Teaching Practices, Subject-Specific Teaching Practices, Pre-Clinical Experiences, Demonstration Teaching, Cohort Seminar, the Teacher Work Sample, and the new Teacher Performance Assessment (TPA). We have undertaken this project because we believe it has the potential to have the single biggest impact on student KPIs at WGU. The domains are outdated with most of, the items and prompts having been around for seven years, and therefore needing to be updated to reflect recent advances in educational research. The redevelopment of both the BA in Special Education and MS in Special Education will be folded into this project as Assessment Department bandwidth allows. We are also planning to revise the Science content domains as soon as the Assessment development calendar permits.

In addition, key challenges have arisen in our Early Childhood Education, Special Education, and Science program. We have seen a rise in ECE withdrawals, and continue to investigate the causes. We have initiated concentrated mentoring, and are in the process of implementing other initiatives designed to strengthen the early experiences of ECE students and to provide additional support to incoming ECE students. We are tracking the attrition rates on a monthly basis. The lowest month was September when we saw 13 month retention of just over 58%. We are currently inching upward bit by bit. Ongoing efforts to support the BAECE include monthly mentor information and training sessions. A monthly open agenda question and answer session, publication of news briefs to disseminate important updates and reminders, and ongoing student support chats.

Science attrition continues to cause concern. We recently implemented entry requirements in math and science degree programs that we believe will result in lower attrition rates in the future since these students will have a stronger preliminary background, but this also means lower monthly enrollments.

The BA Math and Science Programs have shown improvement in some areas. For example, 13 month retention rates have increased in a number of areas with only PB-Math 5-12 declining slightly. We are currently collaborating with the Mentoring teams to closely review all students progressing through these programs to track what issues seem to be impacting their retention and graduation progress rates.

College of Business (Sr. Product Manager: Mitsu Phillips)

Business is continuing to grow in size both by way of student body and faculty. With roughly 28% of WGU students engaging in business programs; maintaining and developing innovative products is a key goal for student success.

Key Performance Indicators: One of the largest impacts product managers have made in the Business curriculum is in the breaking apart of poor performing assessments into smaller assessments that are more effective in allowing students to learn the content/skills. The results have created an increase in pass rates and overall satisfaction of the assessments. Specifically, pass rates have jumped from 26% in the ABC2 course to 68% in the new ADC2 course. Not only has there been an increase in the pass rate but students are able to access a pre-assessment and confirm their knowledge prior to taking the final exam. Another example relates to the completion rates in the old BMO1 exam. The assessment maintained a completion rate of 81% before shifting to a split assessment. The change has generated rates of 87% (OBC1) and 91% (QDC1).

Additionally, the new MBA and BSSM programs which launched in July of 2010 continue to provide students with new opportunity within business. To date, roughly 600 students are engaging the new MBA and 100 students are working in the undergraduate sales and sales management degree program.

The new MBA program has generated 12 graduates since its launch in July with an anticipated 20 total graduates by the end of FY2011. To date, no BSSM students have completed the full program.

New Development

A new MS in Accounting is scheduled to launch in January 2012. In discussions with a working group, the Program Council, student focus groups, and mentors, it was determined that while the infrastructure will be built to topically align with the CPA, the CPA itself will not be a part of the degree program. Traditionally after completing 150 hours of course time, most students at traditional institutions then engage in further intense coursework to prepare for the CPA. For the general student population, many of whom may not need the CPA certification, we have decided to develop a graduate degree in accounting that will allow students to be competent to work whether they choose to obtain a CPA or not.

Course Code	Title	Q3 FY2010		Q3 FY2011	
		Pass %	Completion %	Pass %	Completion %
LWC1	FUNDAMENTALS OF BUSINESS LAW AND ETHICS	95.42%	87.40%	93.94%	88.72%
MGC1	PRINCIPLES OF MANAGEMENT	93.03%	94.30%	93.73%	91.66%
ORC1	FUNDAMENTALS OF ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIOR AND LEADERSHIP	95.86%	94.27%	92.48%	92.16%

College of Information Technology (Sr. PM: Gwen Britton)

KPIs: The College of IT has taken a number of steps to address the challenges it faced in trying to improve its KPIs. A major initiative that we believe will have a huge impact is the implementation of a new learning resource, LabSim, to replace less efficient resources. The reason we believe LabSim will be effective when the old LRs were not is that LabSim includes lab simulations, allowing students to act rather than just read. Preliminary results do seem to show a substantial increase in completion rates.

Learning Resources: We are nearly 100% complete with the initiative to move to e-texts. We have adopted learning resources that include lab simulations. The nature of IT is hands-on and these labs provide a student with the ability to apply themselves to manage networks, administer security control, etc. We replaced our practice exam resource with uCertify. LabSim and uCertify also serve as the new pre-assessments for our IT objective exams. Most of our objective exams are industry certifications. These resources are in alignment with the certification vendor's objectives. We have launched an initiative to work with Soomo to wrap some of our courses. The goal is to track a student's progress through the required activities and to provide us with valuable analytics. Implementing Soomo will be particularly beneficial in the BSHI courses, as it will provide the student with immediate feedback on formative assessments throughout the courses of study, a change suggested by CAHIIM. Analytics will allow course mentors to easily track student engagement, and Soomo is including a variety of methods for course mentors to interact within the course with students.

Program Development/Redevelopment: We are planning the launch of a MS in Network Management at the end of 2011. On February 1, we re-launched all of the degree programs. We changed the standard path and reassigned competency units for some of lowest performing assessments. We also changed some of the industry certifications that were used to keep up with current technology. IT trends tend to change every couple of years, which requires us to re-evaluate the certification exams used. The BSHI program is also changing assessments for two of its courses of study from AHIMA objective exams to required tasks. These courses are planned for a July 1 launch.

Course Code	Title	Q3 FY2010		Q3 FY2011	
		Pass %	Completion %	Pass %	Completion %
TEV1	IT FUNDAMENTALS II	77.55%	66.86%	96.66%	84.44%
WPV1	SOFTWARE II	85.71%	75.00%	83.33%	95.65%
TTV1	IT FUNDAMENTALS III	79.73%	67.40%	92.89%	85.17%

College of Health Professions (Sr. PM: Bonnie Beardsley)

The fiscal year has brought with it several major accomplishments, not the least of which is the successful CCNE visit completed in March 2011. Other important points during the year include an evaluation of the current MSN program with maintenance and revision to specific content areas. One particular area of evaluation centered on the RN to BSN completion track.

Another major initiative has been the conclusion of the pilot program WGU and the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC), allowing students to complete either the Nurse Educator or Nurse Executive certification exams as part of their programs. Although we are no longer accepting students into this pilot program it was a testament to WGU staff and its programs that allowed us to participate in this one of a kind program and present this benefit to a number of our students.

Degree Program Development/Redevelopment: One of the largest projects at the university this year has involved the modification of the courses in the Prelicensure program to more closely align those courses with the BSN essentials. Work has begun on the development of an RN to BSN completion track that will enhance the student's opportunities to move directly into the graduate program through bridged courses. The goal is three program offerings; Prelicensure to BSN; RN to BSN completion; and RN to MSN.

Throughout the year a major effort to revise, maintain or redevelop each COS was considered. Every Assessment was reviewed for alignment and pass/completion rates. Extensive workshops were conducted to address poor performing assessments. In many cases old COS versions were closed and learning resources were removed or new ones were added.

The second major project is the development work tied to mapping WGU courses to the new MSN Essentials released in March 2011. This work will begin in fall 2011 and is expected to be completed within one year. The planning stage for the development of the MSN program and tracks is underway.

Course Code	Title	Q3 FY2010		Q3 FY2011	
		Pass %	Completion %	Pass %	Completion %
NGC2	Nursing Theory	90.91	81.25	100	94.44
RAC1	Health Diversity Global Health and Disease Prevention	78.57	100	87.34	98.78
EBT1	Evidence Based Practice	97.92	71.70	99.39	87.61

Liberal Arts/General Education/Education without Boundaries (Sr. PM: Anthony Siciliano)

A key initiative in Liberal Arts has been to repackage the Liberal Arts core in a way that would allow for more transfer credits. For example, students who were scheduled to take the History course at WGU often could not transfer in credit if they had taken History elsewhere unless they had taken BOTH U.S. History and World History because the course was built to cover both. In the new model, the course will be split so that a student could get credit for the appropriate course if they had already taken it and only be required to take the remaining course if the program required it.

This year also saw the launch of the WGU channel, which has received a lot of positive feedback from students and faculty, and as a result we will be adding more just-in-time video clips so that students may use them as needed to answer questions they have.

Key Performance Indicators: Few areas of WGU have had as dramatic of a change as the Liberal Arts. Pass/Completion rates across the board have dramatically improved in the last two years. There are still areas we are working to improve, including the Natural Science course. Meanwhile CLRPS, which had previously been a series of performance tasks with low completion rates has actually swung in the other direction as an objective exam with a 99% pass rate. Recent work on CLRPS has helped us achieve a more reasonable pass rate.

We continue to look at the Education without Boundaries process and the Foundations courses to determine how best to ensure students receive the help they need without placing unnecessary obstacles to their progress. The overwhelming response to what students receive in EWB is positive. We are examining ways to give them the information they need to start their coursework and make the rest of the information available as they would encounter it (the module on how to most effectively work in Taskstream, for example).

With Foundations, early results indicate that this testing process (but not the individual scores themselves) may be a strong indicator of the level of student motivation. Students that either transfer in BOTH the reading and math credits or students that take and pass BOTH the reading and math assessments have a 90% 7-month retention rate. Students that transfer the credits are retained at 88% while students that take and pass both assessments here at WGU are retained at an amazing 95%. We are still in discussions about how best to use this information to help students be successful.

Course Code	Title	Q3 FY2010		Q3 FY2011	
		Pass %	Completion %	Pass %	Completion %
INC1	INTEGRATED NATURAL SCIENCE PART II	67.92%	56.41%	70.02%	60.58%
AZC1	US CONSTITUTION, LAW AND CITIZENSHIP	57.75%	100.00%	80.59%	70.11%
QLC1	COLLEGE ALGEBRA, GEOMETRY, AND MEASUREMENT	77.48%	67.83%	83.51%	73.04%

Degree Development/Redevelopment (Sr. Manager: Randall Case)

The Degree Development team has been working with all programs in a number of key areas. The team has worked across all university departments to develop and implement a standard degree development process that would ensure that degrees are of the highest academic quality, that those degrees are completed on time, and that all stakeholders are engaged in the process, not simply included in the launch announcement. For the first time we have a formal process that requires a detailed conceptual framework that all Associate Provosts must approve prior to development and a project management team to shepherd each course/program through the process.

In keeping with our goal of increasing our graduate to undergraduate ratio this team has worked with Product Managers in developing a number of new degrees, including an MS in Accounting and MS in Network Management. They also have the responsibility for doing quality assurance reviews of degrees we have launched in the last year, including the new MBA, the BS in Sales and Sales Management, and the MS Nursing. These are discussed in more detail in the appropriate college section of this newsletter.

A huge initiative that is ongoing since last Fall has been a collaborative effort with the Assessment Department to review alignment and content of assessment items in low performing (low pass and completion rates). Each of the product managers have participated in extensive workshops to clean up (and in many cases eliminate) items that have been identified as confusing, inaccurate, misaligned, etc. At this point we have reviewed 71 assessments, impacting every college and have scheduled reviews continuing throughout the rest of the year.

Learning Resources/Courses of Study (Sr. Manager: Margaret Korosec)

The Learning Resource team has been heavily engaged in seeing through the mandate to have as substantial an impact on the WGU student experience as previous focus on assessment and mentoring has had.

Major initiatives:

E-texts: We are currently completing a project that will make approximately 75% of all texts available in digital form. There are a few texts that are not currently available and will remain in hard cover and a second group of texts that we believe can be replaced with a different e-text after alignment, resulting in that 75% moving closer to 90%. The discovery of suitable digital replacements for hardcopy text purchases will continue towards the goal of full digitization, which will also in many cases include an updating of materials to more current editions.

Deep Linking: The deep-linking effort aims to offer students a more seamless coordination between their courses of study, the learning resources, and the coaching reports, thus allowing students to be pointed directly to the material they need to master. These coaching reports, offered as feedback on objective assessments, were aligned more directly

with the courses of study. Then a link was created that enables students to be directed to the relevant course activities by topic from directly within the coaching reports. This will help students and mentors alike to focus on the areas of study that need additional study. At present, all objective assessment coaching reports have been submitted for alignment, with 109 assessments addressed and 80% of links in place and active. The final resolution and completion of linking in all coaching reports is expected by June 2011. Additionally, this deep-linking was applied between our courses of study and their respective learning resources. This effort provides just-in-time delivery of learning resources, in most cases giving students a direct click to their reading assignment or course modules directly from the activity instructions

Single Sign On: Single sign-on eliminates the need for students to actually request, wait for, track, and continually enter access codes or passwords for learning resources. Instead, the SSO approach allows students to simply click a link in the course of study and be immediately place within the resource.   At present we have successfully integrated Soomo, MindEdge, and SkillSoft materials, and more of our major providers like Thinkwell and Cengage are in the finalization process currently. Since beginning this process, almost 5000 different learning resource items have been added to our Equella LR catalog.

Timing of Activities in Courses of Study: In collaboration with Student Services, the COS team has worked to review the amount of time a Course of Study indicates is necessary for completion compared to the amount of time indicated by CU value. For example, a 3 CU course should indicate that it is to be completed in 6 weeks at the undergraduate level, but when looking at what the COS says it often indicates either more or less weeks are necessary.

Weighting of Activities in Courses of Study: This project Is quite different from the Timing work being done and focuses rather on the amount of time it would take an average student to complete the activities associated with a Course of Study in the amount of time available based upon CU values. For example, requiring students to read thousands of pages of texts within a month does not lend itself to an engaging or reasonable student experience. In this instance the COS teams are working closely with product managers to audit the nature and number of activities to ensure that students can finish their interactions in the amount of time being indicated.

Comprehensive Course of Study Audit: Recently, it became clear that many of these projects related to the Course of Study could not be done in isolation. Reviewing the amount of time an entire COS would take can't be completed until you have certified that you have signed off on all of the LRs that will be used, for example. As a result the COS team is creating a comprehensive calendar/project plan that will indicate everything that needs to be done to any given COS before we feel it can be approved and launched. Each of the most recent versions of a COS will undergo this process, in the hope that once it is done, revisions and continuous improvement will still take place but there will no longer be a need to do complete overhauls of a COS.

Examination of new technologies and LRs: In the past year the Learning Resources Specialists have worked with the Product Management team to review dozens of potential LRs, implementing some directly and, in other cases, implementing the functionality of one tool in another resource. Regardless of the LR all future LRs should have these things in common: (1) a pre-diagnostic tool that allows the student to know which areas they are already competent in and which areas they should focus on for developing competency; (2) digital formats for all learning resources used; (3) multiple ways of mastering competency, including mobile learning capabilities; (4) the ability for both student and course mentors to track student engagement and performance, and (5) the ability for students to evaluate whether they have learned the material in a given section of the LR prior to moving forward to the next section or to taking the high-stakes assessment.

As an overview, the Alumni and Career Services team has launched a number of initiatives throughout the year. Primarily they were focused on increasing engagement of alumni with the university and current students, providing job assistance to both current students and graduates, tracking/reporting on the activities of WGU graduates and the impact our graduates are having in the workplace or at other universities when they pursue other degrees.

Alumni and Career Services is also developing a WGU Alumni Peer Mentor Network for students and graduates. This program will be designed to help students and graduates connect with WGU alumni who have volunteered to assist with career development (advice/insight about graduate school process, information about the alum's career, relocation advice, job shadow opportunities, informational interviews, etc). In 2010, the Alumni and Career Services team provided career support to 2,452 (students/graduates) and WGU alumni answered 246 Ask-a-Grad requests from prospective and current students.

This April, Alumni and Career Services marked its one year anniversary of the WGU Career Café webinars, serving over 1,700 attendees. Alumni and Career Services engaged twelve alumni and two students to present career webinars. Another increasingly successful program is the launch of the WGU Online Job Club, which is an online support group for unemployed students and graduates. To date, 182 students and graduates have participated in the online job club. Besides interacting online, WGU students and alumni will have opportunities to interact and network in person. This Spring, six network gatherings are being organized by students and alumni: Kalispell, MT; Chicago, IL; Polson, MT; Houston; TX; and San Jose, CA.

WGU is also quickly approaching the 10,000th graduate mark. As of March 31, 2011, the top five graduate-producing states are: Utah (1,050), Texas (886), California (833), Georgia (615) and Washington (490). To capture the impact WGU graduates have in the workplace, WGU will be conducting an annual employer case study and employer survey.